

Research report

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Character Strengths and Maturity for Professional Choice in Integrated High School Education

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Abstract

The study aimed to investigate the impact of the explanatory variable Character Strengths on the criterion variable Maturity for Professional Choice and to compare the behavior of the variables by gender and type of institution. Participants were 350 Integrated High School students from different courses, 204 from a public school, aged between 14 and 20 years ($M = 16.68$; $SD = 0.94$), and 126 from a private school, aged between ($M = 16.5$; $SD = 0.85$). The Character Strengths Scale and the Maturity for Professional Choice Scale were used. The results showed differences for females in the Determination, Responsibility, and Independence factors and between public and private institutions for Independence and Knowledge of Reality. A non-linear correlation and a dependency relationship were found between the variables tested. A prospective study could investigate the behavior of variables in freshmen and veterans throughout Integrated High School.

Keywords: Positive Psychology; Professional Maturity; High School

Forças de Caráter e Maturidade para Escolha Profissional no Ensino Médio Integrado

Resumo

O objetivo do estudo foi investigar o impacto da variável explicativa Forças de Caráter na variável critério Maturidade para a Escolha Profissional e comparar o comportamento das variáveis por sexo e tipo de instituição. Participaram 350 estudantes do ensino médio integrado de diferentes cursos, sendo 204 de uma escola pública, com idade entre 14 e 20 anos ($M = 16,68$; $DP = 0,94$) e 126 de uma particular, com idade entre ($M = 16,5$; $DP = 0,85$). Utilizou-se a Escala de Forças e Virtudes e a Escala de Maturidade para Escolha Profissional. Os resultados apontaram diferenças para o sexo feminino nos fatores Determinação, Responsabilidade e Independência e entre instituição pública e privada para Independência e Conhecimento da Realidade. Foi encontrada correlação não linear e uma relação de dependência entre as variáveis testadas. Estudo prospectivo pode investigar o comportamento das variáveis em ingressantes e veteranos ao longo do ensino médio integrado.

Palavras-chave: Psicologia positiva; maturidade profissional; ensino médio

Fortalezas del carácter y Madurez para la Elección Profesional en la Educación Secundaria Integrada

Resumen

El objetivo del estudio fue investigar el impacto de la variable explicativa Fortalezas de Carácter sobre la variable criterio Madurez para la Elección Profesional y comparar el comportamiento de las variables por género y tipo de institución. Participaron 350 estudiantes de Educación Secundaria Integrada de diferentes cursos, 204 de colegio público, con edades entre 14 y 20 años ($M = 16.68$; $DE = 0.94$) y 126 de colegio privado, con edades entre ($M = 16.5$; $DE = 0.85$). Se utilizaron la Escala de Fortalezas del Carácter y la Escala de Madurez para la Elección Profesional. Resultados mostraron diferencias para el sexo femenino en los factores Determinación, Responsabilidad e Independencia y entre instituciones públicas y privadas para Independencia y Conocimiento de Realidad. Se encontró una correlación no lineal y una relación de dependencia entre las variables probadas. Un estudio prospectivo puede investigar el comportamiento de las variables en estudiantes de primer año y veteranos a lo largo de la Educación Secundaria Integrada.

Palabras clave: Psicología positiva; Madurez profesional; Educación Secundaria

Introduction

The mission of education in the contemporary world emphasizes two aspects. The first is directed towards human and social development, favoring a humanistic and scientific education that is directed toward fostering autonomy and critical thinking in

the individual, thereby molding a citizen capable of transforming the reality in which they live. The second underscores the impacts of education on economic development, prioritizing the utilitarian sense of education as a tool for the preparation of the workforce (Feres, 2018).

The first aspect promotes students' access to education focused on collective, supportive, and interactive work, contributing to individual qualification and the appreciation of teamwork. The primary objective is to shape a competent professional-citizen, able to articulate theory and practice, demonstrating knowledge, skills, and attitudes to perform tasks such as planning, organizing, and leading, in accordance with ethical, human, social, and environmental principles (Feres, 2018; Ramos, 2017).

The legal framework determining the provision of Integrated High School Education (IHSE) is based on Law 11.892/2008 and Resolution CNE/CEB No. 06/2012, which define the National Curricular Guidelines for the provision of Integrated High School Education, in addition to the current general education legislation - LDB, established by Law 13.415/2017. Integrated High School Education is guided by ethical, political, and pedagogical principles, aiming to integrate technology and humanism, with professional practice as the main axis of the technical education curriculum (Feres, 2018; Ramos, 2017).

Beyond the legal framework of Brazilian education, the student who has access to this form of education must be considered. This stage of schooling commonly caters to adolescents, who are undergoing various changes (Sobrosa et al., 2015). Adolescence can be defined as a process constituted in the subject's relationship with the context (Moraes & Weinmann, 2020), contributing to cognitive and affective development, potentially resulting in the gradual construction of internal and external resources leading to autonomy in decision-making and enabling qualitative and cooperative relationships. Additionally, the individual deals with social roles and commitments to the groups in which they are included. Doubts and uncertainties are termed identity crises (Batoool & Ghayas, 2020), and one of the tasks associated with this crisis is defining a professional future.

Adolescents are the main protagonists in this moment of career choice and are influenced by internal and external factors. In this context, Character Strengths (CS) or personal strengths are a relevant construct and refer to the pursuit of prosperity, where

individuals attempt to create opportunities and to deal with and overcome life's adversities (Niemic, 2019). Integrated High School Education aims to prepare the student from an omnilateral perspective, focused on the psychosocial and professional development of the student, understanding the student in their entirety and not just oriented towards the competencies demanded by the job market (Ramos, 2017).

Understanding CS in adolescents of IHSE implies identifying the values and positive aspects that young people use to deal with identity crises (Batoool & Ghayas, 2020). Professional identity refers to interests and preferences for one profession over another. The intended goals will be linked to the choices made and personal characteristics, promoting a direction for career choice (Bohoslavsky, 1998).

Character strengths or personal strengths are defined as positive characteristics related to human behaviors, thoughts, and feelings. They are positive psychological traits, which are relatively stable aspects of the personality and can be measured through individual differences. They can also be implemented through interventions that aim to teach strategies to enhance a person's strengths, as well as identify underutilized strengths, contributing to the development of kindness and improving people's lives (Niemic, 2019; Park & Peterson, 2006; Peterson & Seligman, 2004; Wolff et al., 2021). Character strengths refer to common values present throughout the history of civilizations, in different cultures, and philosophical and religious concepts. Organized into six virtues, each subdivided to measure the 24 CS (Peterson & Seligman, 2004), this classification provides a common language for understanding, researching, and discussing the best qualities in people (Niemic, 2018).

The increased frequency of these strengths enables the experience of more positive emotions, improved interpersonal relationships, and heightened engagement in various activities such as work and studies (Littman-Ovadia et al., 2017). The significance of these strengths lies in their function as protective factors for mental health, fostering healthier individual development (Littman-Ovadia & Steger, 2010), thereby mitigating symptoms of anxiety and depression (Rouse et al., 2015). This, in turn, enhances psychological and subjective well-being (Oliveira et al., 2016) and emotional self-regulation (Noronha & Batista, 2020). Noronha and Campos (2018) identified strengths that can be predicted by personality traits, such as extraversion and socialization.

Character strengths are a subject of investigation among fundamental education students, as advancements in research could significantly contribute to pedagogical proposals and student mental health. Studies considering gender, age (Huo et al., 2022; Ferragut et al., 2014; Oppong et al., 2022), and type of school institution could yield pertinent information for developing and promoting positive functioning of individuals, groups, and institutions (Cintra & Guerra, 2017).

Educational institutions, therefore, serve as privileged settings for promoting the well-being of the school community and society at large (Littman-Ovadia & Steger, 2010; Rouse et al., 2015). Dametto and Noronha (2019) investigated the relationships between CS and subjective well-being (SWB) in a sample of 826 high school students from public schools in São Paulo, aged between 14 to 18 years, with 60.3% of participants being female. The Character Strengths Scale for Adolescents, the Positive and Negative Affect Scale for Adolescents, and the Life Satisfaction Scale were employed. Results revealed significant correlations between gratitude, hope, vitality, and SWB. Female students demonstrated higher mean scores in authenticity, kindness, and appreciation of beauty. The adolescents aged 17 years exhibited higher means in love and curiosity, while social intelligence and modesty indicated higher levels for those aged 18 years. The study's findings affirm the direct correlation between CS and aspects of subjective well-being, deeming them essential resources for the happiness of young individuals.

In a meta-analysis conducted by Heintz et al. (2017), gender differences in 24 CS were explored, considering nationality and age. The sample comprised 1,189,924 published and unpublished studies. Gender differences were found in 17 of the 24 CS, with women scoring higher than men in appreciation of beauty and excellence, kindness, love, and gratitude. The magnitude of gender differences remained consistent across nationalities, while age significantly moderated 13-14 CS.

Ruvalcava-Romero et al. (2018) aimed to investigate the relationship between CS, life satisfaction, and sociodemographic aspects. Concerning gender, the study found that women scored higher in love and gratitude, explaining 21.3% of the variance in life satisfaction, while love and social intelligence predicted 44.5% of life satisfaction in men. The authors suggest discussing the results in light of cultural differences.

Furthermore, research exploring sociodemographic characteristics of CS in adolescence, a period marked by psychosocial changes (Dallo & Paludo,

2012), could provide new insights into the role of these strengths as protective factors in adverse situations (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). Understanding how the concept of CS aligns with Maturity for Professional Choice could contribute to the development of intervention programs in the educational context, assisting students towards a more enjoyable, engaged, and meaningful personal and professional life (Pacico & Bastianello, 2014).

Adolescents entering Integrated Technical High School supposedly undergo school and psychosocial experiences that favor academic choices after completing the first stage of Fundamental Education. Conceptually, Maturity for Professional Choice refers to the set of attitudes and knowledge an individual accumulates to make a conscious and independent professional choice (Cericatto et al., 2017). Neiva (2014) defined Maturity for Professional Choice based on the factors of determination, responsibility, independence, self-awareness, and knowledge of reality, as per the scale used in the present study.

In this context, the study by Paula and Pestana (2018) aimed to investigate the contributions of a career guidance project applied to high school adolescents in a public institution in the state of São Paulo. The sample consisted of 14 participants, aged between 17 and 19 years, with 6 being male. Only seven students participated in the career guidance intervention. The Maturity for Professional Choice Scale (Neiva, 2014) was used. Results indicated that the group of students undergoing career guidance acquired knowledge for career choice, achieving significant levels of professional maturity. The findings underscore the relevance of actions in Fundamental Education regarding career guidance, potentially assisting in subjective processes of discovery, self-awareness, personal identifications, and connections with the world of work.

Lorga (2017) examined the level of maturity among final-year high school students in public and private institutions in Porto Velho (RO). The Professional Maturity Scale (PMS) and a semi-structured interview were employed. The sample comprised 200 students, with 100 from public schools and 100 from private schools, encompassing both genders and an age range from 16 to 19 years. The study concluded that the majority of participants exhibited satisfactory maturity levels, with the participants from public schools scoring higher than their counterparts from private schools.

Career choices during adolescence are influenced by decisions involving the selection of an occupation

that ostensibly facilitates socio-economic improvement and an enhanced quality of life. Toledo et al. (2021) investigated the associations between CS and life projects among high school students in schools located in São Paulo and Minas Gerais. The study revealed correlations between CS and life projects, with a particular emphasis on the strengths of spirituality, optimism, gratitude, generosity, and a sense of collectivity.

Therefore, it is assumed that students opting for a technical professional career need to comprehend the CS that should be mobilized during this stage of personal and academic life (Dametto & Noronha, 2019) and that supposedly have a connection with career choices. It is understood that students choosing to enter public institutions through competitive selection processes have developed maturity for choosing a technical course, and recognizing and utilizing CS for academic performance, personal life, and professional endeavors. Accordingly, the present study aimed to investigate the impact of the explanatory variable Character Strengths on the criterion variable Maturity for Professional Choice and compare the behavior of variables by gender and type of institution (public and private). Additionally, it aimed to contribute to knowledge for better support of incoming students, considering that many students ascending to Integrated Technical High School are unaware of the academic requirements of technical education.

Method

Participants

The study used a convenience sample comprising 350 students from a public institution in the municipality of Rio de Janeiro and a private institution in Duque de Caxias. The sample from the public institution totaled 204 students of both genders, with 114 (55.88%) being female. The distribution across courses was as follows: 49 (24.01%) in Clinical Analysis, 51 (25.00%) in Administration, 37 (8.82%) in Tourism, 35 (7.84%) in Informatics, and 32 (6.37%) in Electrotechnics. Among these, 12 (5.88%) were from the first year, 126 (61.76%) from the second year, and 66 (32.35%) from the third year, with ages ranging from 14 to 20 years ($M = 16.68$; $SD = 0.94$). A total of 33 students came from socioeconomic level A (16.17%), 34 from B1 (16.66%), 80 from B2 (39.21%), 40 from C1 (19.60%), 16 from C2 (7.84%), and one from D-E (0.49%), according to the Brazilian Association of Research Companies (ABEP, 2020).

The sample from the private institution comprised 146 students of both genders, with 98 (67.00%) being female. The distribution across courses included eight (5.47%) in Administration, 89 (60.95%) in Chemistry, 33 (22.60%) in Tourism, 15 (10.27%) in Environmental Science, and one (0.68%) in Electrotechnics. Among these, 47 (32.19%) were in the second year, and 99 (67.80%) were in the third year, with ages ranging from 14 to 20 years ($M = 16.5$; $SD = 0.85$). A total of 29 students came from socioeconomic level A (20.0%), 41 from B1 (28.0%), 52 from B2 (35.6%), 16 from C1 (11.0%), six from C2 (4.2%), and one from D-E (0.7%). The inclusion criteria for participants were students enrolled in Integrated Technical High School, pursuing different courses, of either gender, aged between 14 and 20 years. The exclusion criterion was the non-participation of students who were enrolled in courses at ITHS.

Instruments

The Character Strengths Scale (Escala de Forças de Caráter - EFC) (Noronha & Barbosa, 2016) was developed based on the Values in Action (VIA) Classification of Strengths by Peterson and Seligman (2004). The scale comprises 71 items, with each of the 24 strengths assessed through three items (except Appreciation of Beauty, which has two items). Participants respond according to a Likert-type scale ranging from 0 (not at all like me) to 4 (very much like me). The items evaluate the characteristics, preferences, and what makes the respondent happy. Examples of items include: "I am competent to give advice" (Wisdom) and "I enjoy being kind to others" (Kindness). The scale demonstrates high precision with a reliability coefficient of .93, explaining 32% of the variance and a unifactorial solution (Noronha et al., 2015; Noronha et al., 2020; Oliveira et al., 2016).

The Maturity for Professional Choice Scale (Escala de Maturidade para Escolha Profissional - EMEP) (Neiva, 2014) consists of 45 items, with responses given on a Likert-type scale ranging from never (1) to always (5). It is divided into five subscales: Determination ($\alpha = .91$) (pertaining to how determined and secure the individual is regarding their professional choice), Responsibility ($\alpha = .79$) (concerning the subject's engagement in the professional choice process and the actions taken to make this decision), Independence ($\alpha = .77$) (referring to how independently the individual processes this decision without influence from others), Self-knowledge ($\alpha = .79$) (pertaining to the individual's

knowledge about various aspects of themselves crucial for professional choice), and Knowledge of the Educational and Socioprofessional Reality ($\alpha = .83$) (related to knowledge about the professional and educational reality). In addition to specific scales, the instrument also provides a total score, which demonstrates a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .91.

Furthermore, a Sociodemographic Questionnaire was employed to gather socioeconomic characterization data from the participants.

Ethical procedures

The project was submitted and approved by the University Ethics Committee. All participants were informed about the research objectives, the non-mandatory nature of participation, and the option to withdraw consent at any stage of the study, in accordance with Resolutions 466/2012 and 510/2016 of the National Health Council. Parents, guardians, or students over 18 years of age signed the consent form, and students below the legal age signed the assent form.

Data Collection Procedures

Initially, contact was made with the educational institutions and their respective administrations to introduce the study and its objectives. Subsequently, a meeting with parents and students was conducted to present the study. Finally, classroom visits were made to invite students to participate, and the consent and assent forms were distributed. Upon the return of the forms, a date was scheduled for participants to respond to the scales in the classroom, in a single session, following this sequence: Sociodemographic Questionnaire, Character Strengths Scale, and Maturity for Professional Choice Scale.

Data Analysis Procedures

The data were statistically analyzed using the SPSS, version 26, package. The Pearson correlation and Student's *t*-test were conducted to compare groups by gender and educational institution. Simple Linear Regression (SLR) was used to investigate the impact of the criterion variable (Maturity for Professional Choice) on the explanatory variable (CS), considering the total score of the EFC and the five factors of the EMEP. Subsequently, a nonlinear correlation analysis between CS and Maturity for Professional Choice variables was performed using RStudio (devtools/dcor/nlcor package). Nonlinear correlation deals with the lack of adjustment of dependent relationships,

allowing the interpretation of the distance correlation coefficient between two unrelated variables (Ranjan & Najari, 2019; 2020; Székely et al., 2007; Székely & Rizzo, 2009). Initially, an analysis using the “nlcor” package was applied to confirm non-linearity between variables. In this type of analysis, a value close to 1 indicates a non-linear correlation.

Next, a distance correlation coefficient analysis was conducted using the “dcor” package (Székely et al., 2007; Székely & Rizzo, 2009). In distance correlation analysis, there is no need for matrix inversion or parameter estimation, serving as a natural extension of Pearson's covariance and a new methodology for measuring dependence (Edelmann et al., 2021). When covariance values are absolute 0, it suggests independence between factors, meaning no relationship. In interpreting the possibility of dependence, correlation values indicate how far one variable is from another, with it being recommended that this is not close to 1 (Székely et al., 2007; Székely & Rizzo, 2009). Both analyses were performed using the RStudio language.

Results

The relationships were not significant, except for the factors within the same instrument, namely, the five subscales of the EMEP and the overall score of the EFC for the analyses. In addition to the non-significant correlations, their magnitudes were considered null, as they were close to the value of 0. Subsequently, through SLR, it was identified that CS did not have predictive power on Maturity for Professional Choice, as the model was statistically non-significant $F(2)=0.06$, $p < .234$; explaining 0% of the variance in Maturity for Professional Choice.

Analyses were conducted to assess mean differences between groups, namely, gender (female and male) and institution (private and public). Table 1 describes the results of the Student's *t*-test for the gender group, suggesting a low-effect difference for determination ($M = 36.4_{\text{female}}$; $M = 35.3_{\text{male}}$), responsibility ($M = 38.0_{\text{female}}$; $M = 36.8_{\text{male}}$), and independence (28.8_{female} ; 26.2_{male}).

In terms of institutions, the Student's *t*-test indicated a low-effect difference for CS ($M = 183.9_{\text{private}}$; $M = 190.0_{\text{public}}$), independence ($M = 29.2_{\text{private}}$; $M = 26.7_{\text{public}}$), and awareness of the reality ($M = 31.3_{\text{private}}$; $M = 32.2_{\text{public}}$) (Table 2).

Since the results of the Pearson correlation coefficient showed null magnitudes, non-linear correlation was considered as a possibility for understanding the

Table 1.
Group difference between sexes (male and female)

	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	Cohen's <i>d</i>
Character strengths:	0.803	348	.422	.0873
Determination	-1.106	348	.270	-.1202
Responsibility	-1.826	348	.069	-.1985
Independence	-1.243	348	.215	-.1352
Self-awareness	-0.181	348	.856	-.0197
Knowledge of reality	-0.292	348	.771	-.0317

Table 2.
Group differences between institutions (public and private)

	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	Cohen's <i>d</i>
Character strengths:	1.585	348	.114	.1718
Determination	0.104	348	.917	.0113
Responsibility	0.504	348	.614	.0547
Independence	-1.231	348	.219	-.1335
Self-awareness	-0.494	348	.621	-.0536
Knowledge of reality	1.273	348	.204	.1380

relationship between the variables. In all relationships between the EFV and the factors of the EMEP, the analysis results supported a non-linear relationship, as it presented an index of .896. Figure 1 shows that, unlike a linear correlation that presents a straight line, the variables demonstrated a curved trend, suggesting a non-linear relationship.

It is understood that the non-linear relationship may indicate dependency, however, it is not possible to adjust the scatter plot, as shown in Figure 1.

Additionally, the results obtained are significant, as they present a *p*-value < .001.

Next, the results of the distance correlation coefficient suggest that the factors demonstrate dependence between them, as they present values above 0 for covariance. The indices are presented in Table 3.

The correlation values presented in Table 3 support the non-linear relationship by showing values further from 1 and closer to 0. Therefore, the results of both analyses indicate that the EFV and the factors

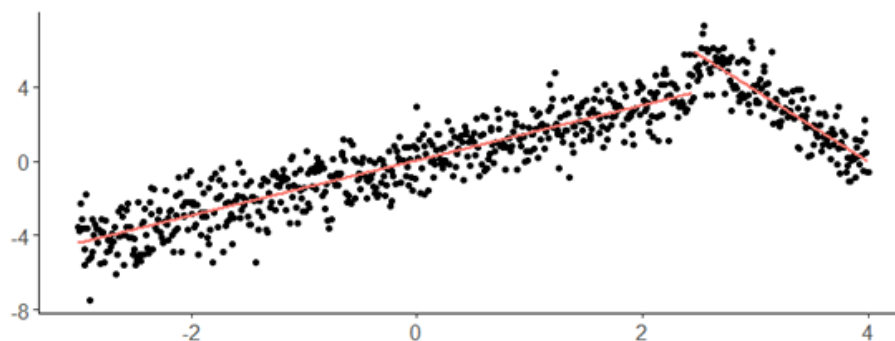


Figure 1. Nonlinear relationship between variables

Table 3.
Distance correlation coefficient between EFV and EMEP

	EFV	
	Covariance	Correlation
Determination	0.835	.068
Responsibility	0.945	.099
Independence	0.973	.100
Self-awareness	0.743	.088
Knowledge of reality	1.288	.130

of the EMEP, although dependent, do not present a straight line, demonstrating a non-linear relationship between the variables.

Discussion

The results obtained regarding the difference between male and female students concerning the dimensions of Determination, Responsibility, and Independence for the variable Maturity for Professional Choice demonstrated higher scores for girls. Research on the subject indicates that women are more prepared to take on responsibilities in their future professions (Cericatto et al., 2017; Oppong et al., 2022; Reig-Aleixandre et al., 2023). Studies such as those by Manivannan and Venkataraman (2018) and Neiva et al. (2005) highlight that female students exhibit higher levels of Maturity for Professional Choice than male students, possibly because they are more encouraged to develop responsible attitudes. In this regard, it is considered that women are culturally influenced by concepts and actions that bring them closer to situations requiring responsibility, such as taking care of the household and younger siblings, likely contributing to developing greater responsibility in choosing their future profession (Cericatto et al., 2017).

The Determination factor is associated with age, suggesting that older students appear to be more defined and secure in their professional choices, considering the age progression and the execution of more effective activities related to career choices (Oppong et al., 2022), such as entering the internship field. The results may indicate a knowledge gap, considering that studies often involve samples of regular high school students (Cericatto et al., 2017; Neiva et al., 2005) who do not opt for a technical profession upon completing lower high school education.

The school is an institution responsible for promoting socialization and the development of intellectual, emotional, and moral skills. Understanding the correlation between CS and the sociodemographic variable of gender can guide support and welcoming actions throughout lower high school education, considering that many professions have choice percentages related to gender stereotypes (Pessoa et al., 2021). Research on CS considering sociodemographic data, such as gender, country, and age, shows that in developing countries, women score higher than men in appreciation of beauty and excellence, kindness, love, and gratitude (Heintz et al., 2017; Ruvalcaba-Romero et al., 2018), indicating a more collective approach to life compared to nations with higher levels of socioeconomic development, which tend to have a more individualistic approach. Considering the Independence factor of Maturity for Professional Choice, the result obtained may suggest that the female students in the sample reflected on their interests and made decisions with greater autonomy and less pressure from family or peers (Oliveira & Neiva, 2013).

The school plays a crucial role in collective relationships, learning, and student life, as well as in the choices made by adolescents. The differences obtained regarding the type of institution, despite low-effect indices, allow for analysis, as there are differences highlighted in the literature. The indices achieved in the Independence and Knowledge of Reality factors of the EMEP concerning the type of institution suggest that students from public schools in the sample were more mature in choosing a profession than their private school counterparts, considering that they undergo a highly competitive selection process for admission. Therefore, it is expected that the student demonstrates greater effort and dedication to studies, justifying the results obtained in the Maturity

for Professional Choice for the Independence and Knowledge of Reality factors. The Independence factor refers to the way of processing the decision to choose more autonomously and without much influence from others, and Knowledge of Reality relates to knowledge of the chosen technical profession and the institution (Lorga, 2017; Manivannan & Venkataraman, 2018; Paula & Pestana, 2018).

Finally, regarding the impact of the variables, a nonlinear and dependent association between the study variables was observed. Nonlinear relationships can be defined as those that do not have a constant slope, not growing or decreasing at the same intensity or rate (Székely et al., 2007; Székely & Rizzo, 2009). Therefore, it can be considered that the Maturity for Professional Choice score does not increase or decrease at the same intensity as the CS variable score. Accordingly, it is understood that students who positively experience emotions, relationships, preferences, and what makes them happy perceive themselves as responsible, determined, and independent in choosing their future technical profession. These students see themselves as competent and committed to managing personal, academic, and work demands and challenges (Littman-Ovadia et al., 2017; Park & Peterson, 2006).

Final Considerations

The study aimed to investigate the impact of the explanatory variable Character Strengths on the criterion variable Maturity for Professional Choice and to compare the behavior of the variables by gender and type of institution. A low effect correlation was obtained for gender and type of institution regarding Maturity for Professional Choice and CS. Therefore, there is a need for more research on the variables tested in this study with students of Integrated High School Education, investigating which strengths are known and practiced among students and considering sociodemographic data such as gender, socioeconomic level, and locality.

The results achieved can contribute to primary interventions with future technical-level professionals, considering the promotion of their potential and human well-being. Primary interventions assist in career planning, contributing to the student and future professional planning what they want for themselves, developing skills for the desired position, and understanding whether the future workplace can offer the growth opportunities they aspire to.

The school is a context that can offer unique opportunities for the development of initiatives aimed at promoting the well-being of students. It is in school that most of the day is spent, interactions with peers, teachers, and support staff are established, and relationships are built that are important pillars in psychological growth and essential in promoting a balanced and healthy life experience.

In terms of limitations, it should be mentioned that the sample consisted of students from one public and one private school in a single state. It is suggested that new research include samples from different regions of the country with diverse cultural characteristics in longitudinal studies, allowing for the tracking of students over the years of Integrated High School Education, using not only self-report instruments to better control the possibility of biases but also investigating differences in the behavior of the variables in freshman and veteran students.

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